



# Tourism Commission Meeting Minutes

Monday, November 04, 2024 at 6:30 PM

Columbus City Hall – 105 N. Dickason Boulevard

The meeting was called to order at 6:32pm by Walcott.

A quorum of the Tourism Commission present included Belschner, Famularo, Hammer, Roelke, Walcott, and Walker. Staff liaison Bennett was also present. City Administrator Matt Amundson, Ruth Hermanson, and Sarah Meintzer were in attendance.

Bennett informed the commission that the meeting was properly noticed.

Hammer motions to approve the agenda for Monday, November 4, 2024, as presented. Roelke seconds. Motion carries by unanimous vote.

Roelke motions to approve the minutes from October 7, 2024, as presented. Famularo seconds. Motion carries by unanimous vote.

## 1. Review and Approve Minutes from October 7, 2024

Those in attendance were introduced, but did not participate in the public comment. No other correspondence was received.

### Unfinished Business

2. Bennett presented a brief update for the Tourism budget. There were no new revenues from room taxes reported. Notable expenditures include \$151.96 for Google Ads. \$21,897.60 remains in the 2024 budget.

Bennett informed the Commission on the City's expense line policy which allows for spending up to \$2,000 or 200%, whichever is greater, over a particular line item's budget. This is as long as the overall budget is able to support it and requires City Administrator authorization.

Famularo motions to authorize staff to utilize the expense line policy not to exceed \$1,050 if needed for the Special Events line item. Belschner seconds. Roll call vote: Famularo - aye, Roelke - aye, Walker - aye, Hammer - aye, Walcott - aye, and Belschner - aye. Motion carries unanimously.

3. Ruth Hermanson presented the final report on behalf of the Columbus Historic Landmarks Preservation Commission (CHLPC). CHLPC has applied for \$1,000 in room tax funding for their summer concert series. The concerts had about 300 attendees and some of the vehicles had out of state plates. Out-of-state visitors were joining family and friends.

The Tourism Commission expressed concern for the lack of data relating to paid overnight stays. Belschner suggested offering a survey along with better promotion of the opening acts. Walcott would like more market research for future applications.

Belschner motions to award \$1,000 to CHLPC for their Summer Concert Series. Hammer seconds. Roll call vote: Walker - aye, Famularo - aye, Hammer - aye, Belschner - aye, Walcott - aye, and Roelke - aye. Motion carries unanimously.

4. Sarah Meintzer represented the Columbus, WI Area Chamber of Commerce for its application of \$1,000 that was modified from \$1,225 in room tax funding for the Chamber's Wine Walk event. The

change was to focus more on advertising than for funding a trolley. Last year's event included visitors within 25 miles of Columbus, and many stayed with family.

Belschner motioned to accept the application. Hammer seconds. Discussion included impact on local businesses. Sarah stated that businesses had positive reviews and saw a boost from those attending. The Commission would like for the group to get data for lodging if possible. Belschner asked about the State Statute for tourism funding. Bennett cited that the State looks for likelihood of generating paid lodging stays and does not guarantee those stays. Belschner suggested the Chamber use a survey. Sarah will utilize Eventbrite for the survey. Motion carries by unanimous vote.

## **New Business**

5. Bennett recommended that the City cedes the Events.com calendar to the Columbus, WI Area Chamber of Commerce. The City would like to avoid potential issues with religious events and not appear to be selective of which events are included. Staff cited that since the Chamber is a non-profit, it would be easier for it to solicit other groups for event additions along with promoting the calendar to other local organization websites. Bennett has support from the Chamber, City Administration, and from a newly created Community Collaboration Group. Bennett stated the calendar can still be added to the Tourism website.

Roelke motions to cede Events.com community calendar management to the Chamber of Commerce. Famularo seconds. Motion carries by unanimous vote.

6. Bennett recapped previous discussion regarding the process and guidelines for awarding room tax funding for local events. Bennett presented a proposal for room tax funding guidelines that highlighted objective, categories, process, scoring criteria, and final report materials. The commission discussed the application being awarded with monies given after a review or if the monies were awarded after a final report as a reimbursement. The commission likes the categories but would like to see the sponsorship category be included into the others as part of a requirement. Amundson brought up a concept of an annual de-escalation of funding for repeat events in order to create self-sustaining long-term events. Famularo and Bennett talked about possibly implementing either an annual or bi-annual deadline for submissions, review, and awarding. This could help make budgeting easier. Roelke would like the discussion to continue at the next meeting. The commission agreed.
7. Bennett presented a sales proposal from WMTV Channel 15 for TV and digital ads. There were multiple items, but Bennett focused on WMTV's one day sale costing \$6,000 for 50 commercials and WMTV's holiday bundle consisting of airing ads on their Sounds of the Season program and 15 Days Before Christmas giveaway. The bundle costs \$2,500. After discussing potential return on investment for TV ads, the Tourism Commission decided to not select any of WMTV's options. No motions were made.
8. Bennett presented a sales proposal from Madison Media Partners (MMP) for print and digital ads. There were multiple items, but the Tourism Commission focused on option 1 that included digital banner video, targeted pre-roll, Facebook, ad mail, and print. Option 1 costs \$4,000. Belschner asked if it could include geo-digital that targets ads based on location. The Commission debated whether to have 2 half-page ads or just the 1. Walcott asked about the effectiveness of just promoting the holiday train and not including other events. Bennett stated that the ad buy is just for the holiday train.

Famularo motions to purchase option #1 for \$4,000 and allow for staff to purchase up to an additional \$3,000 for holiday marketing. Walker seconds. Roll call vote: Roelke - aye, Walcott - aye, Famularo - aye, Walker - aye, Hammer - aye, Belschner - abstain. Motion carries unanimously.

## **Staff Reports**

Bennett presented to the Tourism Commission an update to the kayak rental usage since its delivery. The rental has been utilized 13 times, with 4 of those coming from Rent.Fun's membership pass and 9 from general rentals. The membership pass purchases did not originate at the Columbu, so no revenue was earned on those due to the pass' perk of free rentals at any location with purchase and acting like a pre-pay. Revenue from passes is only generated at the location from which they are purchased. The other 9 rentals generated \$275 in revenue in which Tourism is estimated to receive \$137.50 in revenue share. Peak usage times from all rentals were from 4:30pm until 7:00pm.

Items for future agendas include further discussion on room tax funding guidelines and final reports from the Redbud Players and Chamber of Commerce.

The next meeting will be December 9th at 6:30pm in the City Hall Council Chambers.

Famularo motions to adjourn the meeting. Walker seconds. Motion carries by unanimous vote. The meeting adjourned at 7:38pm.

These minutes will be approved at a future meeting and may be amended. These minutes are respectfully submitted by David Bennett, Communications and Economic Development Coordinator.

\*A quorum of city committees and/or commissions may be present at this meeting. No action will be taken or considered by those committees and/or commissions.